

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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INFO USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

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USEEC ALSO FOR EMBASSY

EO:11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, PINS, EI
SUBJECT: NATO MEMBERSHIP FOR IRELAND?

1. DURING LAST WEEKEND'S ANNUAL CONVENTION OF IRELAND'S RULING PARTY, FIANNA FAIL, A RESOLUTION WAS PROPOSED REQUESTING A STATEMENT FROM THE PARTY'S LEADERS CONCERNING "JOINING NATO, THE COMMON DEFENSE POLICY OF THE EEC, AND THE ALIGNMENT WITH NEUTRAL STATES."

2. IN THE PREPARED TEXT OF HIS REPLY TO THE QUESTION, FOREIGN MINISTER O'KENNEDY SIDESTEPPED THE QUESTION ABOUT NATO: "MEMBERSHIP OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOES NOT INVOLVE ANY MILITARY COMMITMENTS WHATSOEVER FOR IRELAND

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AND THE MATTER HAS NEVER ARISEN DURING OUR MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMUNITY."

3. HOWEVER, IN AN OFF-THE-CUFF STATEMENT AMPLIFYING THE WRITTEN TEXT O'KENNEDY SAID THAT IRELAND HAS NOT BEEN ASKED OR PRESSURED TO BE A MEMBER OF NATO AND "IRELAND WILL NOT BE A MEMBER OF NATO." HE THEN WENT ON TO SAY THAT "IF

IT EVER DID GET TO THE POINT, SOMETIME IN THE FUTURE, THAT
THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY WAS BEING ATTACKED, THEN WE,
AS MEMBERS OF THAT COMMUNITY, COULD NOT NEGATE THE FACT.
AS MEMBERS OF THE EEC, WE WOULD HAVE TO PLAY OUR ROLE AND
CARRY OUT OUR OBLIGATIONS RESPONSIBLY."

4. AFTER HIS SPEECH TO THE ASSEMBLED FAITHFUL, O'KENNEDY
HURRIED TO THE PRESS BOX AND EXPLAINED PRIVATELY TO THE
AMBASSADOR WHO WAS OBSERVING THE CONVENTION, THAT
HE HOPED THE USG WOULD NOT GET THE WRONG IMPRESSION FROM
HIS REMARKS. HE HAD BEEN RESPONDING PRINCIPALLY, HE SAID,
TO VARIOUS RECENT JOURNALISTIC SALLIES WHICH HAD ACCUSED
HIM OF BEING "SOFT" ON NEUTRALITY -- THESE, HE SAID, HE
BELIEVES TO HAVE BEEN "INSPIRED" (COMMENT: BY THE SOVIET
EMBASSY), BUT THEY HAVE AROUSED CONSIDERABLE OLD FIANNA
FAIL FEELING -- THE DEVALERA POLICY OF NEUTRALITY AND
AVOIDANCE OF NATO IS STILL A POWERFUL ARTICLE OF FAITH.
HE FELT HE HAD TO REITERATE "TRADITIONAL" POLICY, BUT
WANTED US TO UNDERSTAND THAT IRELAND WAS STILL WITH THE
WEST, AND HIS REMARKS ON "EUROPEAN" SECURITY WERE INTENDED
TO EMPHASIZE THIS ORIENTATION.

5. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH O'KENNEDY'S EXPLANATION TO US IS OF
INTEREST, IT SEEMS APPARENT THAT ANY SLIGHT TENDENCY FOR
FIANNA FAIL, AND THUS THE GOI, TO GET CLOSER TO CONSIDERING
JOINING THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE HAS BEEN SHELVED FOR THE NEAR
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FUTURE. SOME OF THE YOUNGER LEADERS, LIKE O'KENNEDY, HAVE
BEEN STUDYING THE POSSIBILITIES AND RAMIFICATIONS OF IRISH
MEMBERSHIP RATHER FAVORABLY, BUT IT IS APPARENT THAT NONE
OF THEM CONSIDER THE POLITICAL CLIMATE RIPE TO PUSH THE
MATTER. AS WE HAVE RECENTLY STATED IN OUR COMMENTS ON THE
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES PAPER FOR IRELAND (DUBLIN 349), WE
ALSO SEE NO ADVANTAGE TO BE GAINED BY PUSHING THE MATTER
AT THIS TIME. SHANNON

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